

Paul C. Gutjahr — *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. ix, 256.

The role of the Bible in American culture is fundamentally iconic. Far beyond its role as supreme religious authority in the Protestant churches, which until the twentieth century dominated American social consciousness and private mores alike, the Bible was a kind of shibboleth, the symbol of a particularly American civic religion. However *de facto* rather than *de jure*, it was totemic in American political life as well.

Nothing could make this iconic stature of the Bible more transparent than the inaugural ceremony for President George Washington in 1789. After repeating his oath of inauguration with his hand on the Bible, Washington stopped to kiss its opened pages. An attendant quickly stepped forward to mark the place Washington had kissed, which was found to be Genesis, chapters 49–50, a passage that included Joseph the Provider's "dying reminder that God had promised the Israelites a new land" (p. 41).

This narrative, artfully retold by Paul Gutjahr in his second chapter, is metonymic for American culture of the founding period only in ways that this public scene does not make obvious. Behind the stage are elements of the story which highlight the ambiguity or complexity in American institutional efforts at continuity with older traditions. Oath-taking with a hand on the Bible was a practice well established in British common law; the practice goes all the way back to St. Augustine. By contrast, in fact, the U.S. Constitution does not require a Bible for administering the oath of office. Yet the need to draw down irrefragible authority as a witness to the authority being publicly invested in the President occasioned a desperate last-minute search for the acceptable public symbol, a substantial folio Bible. The required copy could be found no closer to hand than in a local Masonic lodge.

That the Bible should have functioned this way in American political culture is not a matter for surprise among social historians. Its analogue in the wider culture is more interesting, and not least because of its own complexities and ambiguities. By the nineteenth century family "parlour Bibles" were as common across the United States as the "great hall Bible" had been in the eighteenth-century Scottish Presbyterian homes of Robbie Burns's youth. Like other elements of iconic furniture, they could send a signal as much of fuzzy sentiment as of a particular order of religious understanding.

For a' that, no one acquainted with the social history of the United States right up until the present day is in the least unaware of the monumental significance of the Bible for the American social ethos generally. Only rarely, however, is general awareness of the phenomenon adequately subtended by specific knowledge of how the Bible has worked to form social and artistic imagination in a diversity of American sub-cultures or how its publishing history demarcates important themes and streams of formative American institutional practice. It is to the latter deficit in particular that Gutjahr's remarkable book is directed, and his study goes a very long way to filling the bill.

Gutjahr's overall purpose is to examine "the principal strategies that various,

often antagonistic, constituencies used in their attempt to maintain the Bible's 'pre-eminence' in the country's print culture" (pp. 3–4). The book's five chapters form a tight structure of chronological and thematic overview. The first reviews the early publishing history of the United States (almost entirely a New England phenomenon until 1880), focusing usefully on the American Bible Society and its first president, Elias Boudinot, "[f]ellow patriot of George Washington ... mentor of Alexander Hamilton, first president of the Continental Congress, delegate to the Constitutional Convention and decade-long director of the United States Mint". The emergence of this society in 1816 accelerated the initial efforts of Robert Aitken (first American New Testament in 1777, first Bible in 1782) and Matthew Carey (first Douay Catholic Bible, 1790) into a programme designed to place a Bible in every American home (1829).

Because literacy rates were very high in the United States in the early nineteenth century (approaching 95 per cent in the Northeast and 85 per cent in the South), this ambition was based in part on a plausible market demand. In his second chapter, Gutjahr details just how much the market drove the proliferation of editions, the prevalence of elaborate decorative bindings, the multiplication of illustrations, and marketing schemes. Custom binding, for example, with embossed leather and monograms, was often offered in the 1860s. (One sentimental Bible owner ordered his copy to be bound in the hide of his favourite dog.)

Chapter 3 considers the proliferation of the new English translations produced during the nineteenth century. While none displaced the reverentially regarded King James (or Authorized) Version, "interested" translations by groups with doctrinal agendas to pursue (Unitarians, Adventists, and Mormons, for example) had the effect, in their various claims and divergences, of calling into doubt the univocal authority of the Bible itself. This, coupled with Catholic challenges to the role of the Bible in public schools — a contest verging at points on social crisis — made its place something of a political battleground. Gutjahr is very good on this question (chapter 4), and his brief treatment of the way in which Catholic pressure led directly to an application to the schools of the First Amendment's clause on the separation of church and state is of much value.

Chapter 5, an excursus into popularized "biblical" narratives — not only Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* (1880) or Joseph Holt Ingraham's almost as successful *The Prince of the House of David* (1855), but Joseph Smith Jr.'s *The Book of Mormon* — takes the reader into perhaps the most fascinating cultural territory of all. Less thorough than the others, this chapter is nevertheless a helpful assessment of the way in which popularization of the Bible in many ways led to a loss of its cultural authority. Heavily illustrated volumes tended to shift the gravity of emphasis to incidental but colourful narratives; a diversity of translations and editions tended to blur the voice of "common memory" found in the KJV; popularizations, especially in the form of novels, tended to shift the reader from ethically demanding prose to entertaining reading; cheap editions available everywhere tended to scuff the formal aura of the great parlour Bible.

One might wish for some things which Gutjahr passes over. He mentions, for example, nineteenth-century contention between Catholics and Protestants over

inclusion of the Apocrypha in Bible editions, but neglects to note that the flagship Protestant KJV had itself included the Apocrypha in the seventeenth century. Something on the matter of its later exclusion would have enriched this part of his discussion. But this is to quibble. The overall achievement of this beautifully illustrated book is a compelling excursus in cultural history that many will find invaluable. Gutjahr is learned, careful, and consistently helpful in his notes and several appendices. His book is a superb addition to our understanding of both religious and cultural history of the nineteenth century. For the history of the Bible in America, it is likely to be the authoritative study for some time to come.

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John MacFarlane — *Ernest Lapointe and Quebec's Influence on Canadian Foreign Policy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Pp. 277.

John MacFarlane s'attaque ici à un des gros morceaux de l'histoire politique canadienne de la première moitié du XX^e siècle : Ernest Lapointe. Lapointe, bien qu'il soit de façon évidente l'un des piliers de la période, n'a pas vraiment fait l'objet de recherches poussées jusqu'à maintenant. C'est un grand manque dans notre historiographie, et MacFarlane tente ici de donner le signal de départ à ce que nous espérons tous être un nouvel élan dans la recherche en histoire politique.

Cet ouvrage est tiré de la thèse de doctorat de l'auteur et veut étudier l'influence qu'a eue Ernest Lapointe en tant que représentant des intérêts du Québec dans le cabinet fédéral, auprès du décideur ultime qu'est le premier ministre William Lyon Mackenzie King (donc de 1921 à son décès en 1941). MacFarlane veut voir comment les positions de Lapointe, et les stratégies qu'il emploie pour influencer King, réussissent à orienter les décisions du premier ministre. L'auteur choisit de se concentrer sur les dossiers reliés à la politique étrangère canadienne puisque ce domaine est un des préférés de Lapointe (contrairement à la cuisine partisane de comté), donc un domaine qui retient l'attention particulière du ministre. Pour ce faire, MacFarlane regarde quelques sujets plus à fond, parmi lesquels la crise de Chanak, les discussions autour de l'article X de la charte de la Société des nations, la position canadienne face à la Guerre civile espagnole, les conférences impériales et, bien entendu, la participation canadienne à la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Mais l'ouvrage ne se limite pas qu'à ça. Il nous permet également de mieux comprendre la dynamique existant entre Lapointe et King et de remettre chacun à sa véritable place. Ainsi, MacFarlane nous permet de mieux voir comment King, à l'encontre de ce que plusieurs historiens partisans de l'homme d'État ont écrit, ne comprend que bien peu de choses à la société franco-catholique du Québec, réagissant d'instinct en anglo-protestant. MacFarlane nous permet de voir comment King lui-même avoue ne pas pouvoir se passer de Lapointe quand il est question de l'opinion de la province, et surtout de la façon de la manipuler. Ce que plusieurs ont plus tard décrit comme une connaissance et une sensibilité exceptionnelles de la part de King par rapport au Québec n'est en fait que la démonstration de l'influence certaine que Lapointe a sur